



SUMMER Weekly

Reader

Volume 213, Issue 278, September 7th, 2017

The Plano Rotary Club
www.PlanoRotary.com

Not Dysfunctional

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Sept 7

Cheryl Williams;
Medical & Mental Health Issues
in Collin County

Sept 14

Neil Matkin;
Collin College Update

Sept 21

TBD
Hurricane Harvey -
Local Contributions



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Clay Curtis	Sept 10
Hubert Aaron	Sept 17



JIM COOPER greeted everyone with a smile today, perhaps because he's newly-engaged. Someone cruel commented upon his fetching nose ring. Jim also led the Pledge, dedicating himself to *Wife, Liberty, and the Pursuit of her Happiness*. But, Jim's being beyond the help of prayer, the Invocation was given by **Blair Ritchey** after *He Whose Patience Has Been Rewarded* opened the meeting at 12:12.

SERGEANT KRAMER noted two illustrious guests from *Plano East*, **Earnest Mr. Wonderful Burke** and **Lenny Schwartz**. **Olin Jaye** introduced a "prominent Realtor®," **Randall Shinn**. **Jamee Jolly**



bade us welcome **Ariel O'Brien**, and proud Grandma **Jo Via** fed grandson, **Cooper**



Jackson, telling all and sundry that Cooper had been recognized on the floor of the House this spring by the day's speaker, Rep. **Jeff Leach**. (Mere mother, **Jessica Jackson**, was relegated to bringing lunch.)

JASON thanked us for filling out embarrassing anecdotes suitable for blackmail



and called upon *Scary Bob Epstein* to stand and deliver. Bob told us he joined Rotary in 1986 and that his passion for all things military led him first into duty as an MP and finally to several years duty as a Bouncer in

the *Lew Sterrett Jail* in downtown Dallas. He's active as a Drug Demand Reduction officer and an aerial photographer serving that end. Rick suggested that "if you need favors, Bob obviously has lots of time on his hands."

Rick announced that **Janis Allman** is currently recovering from heart valve replacement surgery at home. He passed around a *Get Well* card but cautioned us that Janis isn't up to calls or visitors yet. Someone said that made her the "perfect patient."

Rick noted the call for 600 volunteers to pack Houston-bound foodstuffs a Highland Park's *Presbyterian Church* had already been met by eager 5810 members. Soon 5810 will have a donation button for flood relief on its website. He said that boats and rescuers are no longer needed, but South Texas will be in need of logistics experts for the cleanup.

He also announced that Lenny would take flag orders for *Plano East's* program. Then he turned the podium over to Program Chair **Olin Jaye**.

Olin told us that Jeff Leach has been "born in a log cabin in West Plano" and was from a poor farm family. Having exhausted his lies, Olin said that *PISD* graduate had gone to *Baylor University* before turning to the Law. He is now the State Representative for House District 77, and Olin has assigned him the known task of giving us a legislative update and the hidden task of updating us on Hurricane Harvey's aftermath.



Jeff decided to address first *“the elephant in the room,”* his beard. He used to be a wholesome, clean-shaven youth, but, on finding himself isolated for few days, he decided to find out if *“I can grow a beard.”* One Van Dyke later, the answer was almost clear. Governor **Greg Abbott** told him that he must keep the beard until *“the Special Session passes all its legislation.”* It didn’t, so the beard persists. His spouse may veto the Governor on this.



He introduced his Chief of Staff, **Mary McClure**. Someone suggested she was the power behind the throne, but, as with any true Puppet Master, she demurred. She’s also his Communications Director and *“does a tremendous job”* in *“service to the community.”* He declared his most important job to be *“listening to you.”* (There was a suspicion he directed that remark at Mary.)

He acknowledged Cooper Jackson saying, *“I’m glad you’re here.”* He cautioned Cooper to be ready with salient questions at the end of his presentation.

Jeff addressed the hurricane-ravaged coast first. He said, *“We’re wondering what we can do.”* And, *“We feel helpless. Yes, we can donate, collect blankets,”* etc., but he and a friend took a boat down to the coast, camping out in the Katy woodlands. He observed *“10’ of water over a golf course”* and concluded that this was *“a catastrophe of epic proportions.”* They proceeded to rescue people and pets from their flooded homes.

He wanted to make two points about the disaster:

1. *“It’s times like these that the best comes out”* in a people. It *“reveals the character of states and nations.”* He saw a West Virginia man on a jet ski, saving pets, and people *“caring for one another”* without regard to *“politics, gender, ethnicity.”*
2. The real work lies ahead. This is *“the costliest disaster in American history, larger than Sandy and Katrina combined.”*

He urged those thinking of going down to help out to get in touch with his office for a list of contacts in the area. With that, he returned to the boring business of Austin politics. He said he’ll know when to wrap up *“when Olin falls asleep.”*

He said this recently concluded legislative session was characterized by *“wins, losses, and missed opportunities.”* So not entirely dysfunctional as we’ve come to expect from legislative bodies.

In the former category, he said, *“California asks, ‘How to keep our people here?’,”* but Texas asks instead, *“How to take care of those now and those coming?”* The population of Texas stands a 27 million, but it’s expected to double in 30 years, and Collin County’s population will triple in the same period. Those numbers have an impact on *“schools, water, and the State budget.”* Silver-tongued devil that he was, he praised **Nancy Humphrey** for *“the wonderful job of communicating with us.”*



The legislature has passed bills on border security (\$215M), mental health, and *“held the line on transportation.”* Jeff asked Gov. Abbott to declare an emergency in Child Protective Services and Foster Care, and with that, they approved special funding for those embarrassments. And Sexual Assault on Campus is *“now addressed better.”* The legislature *“broke through the red tape”* preventing Collin College from offering a 4-year Nursing degree (the *“red tape”* ensuing from it being a 2-year college). The missing nursing talent had been *“adding to the cost of healthcare.”*



Under the category of *“missed opportunities,”* lies *“school finance and property tax reform.”* Jeff claimed that people are being *“taxed out of their homes.”* He said that the bipartisan committee studying it *“has to deliver.”* Since it goes *“hand-in-hand with school finance reform,”* *“it’s much more complicated.”*

The State needs to *“lower property tax bills”* and yet *“pump more money into school finance.”* But there are *“failing schools in Texas that don’t need more money,”* just institutional reform. (Perhaps privatized, Jeff?)

But House-Senate politics got in the way of progress, so that’s a failure. During the next legislative session, *“We need to listen to you and pass this.”*

Mary handed out copies of Jeff’s **Rotunda Report** for 30 August which concentrated upon disaster relief and what could be done through local agencies. It included a call for the donation of blood.

In the Q&A that followed, **John Caldwell** pointed to a \$700 drop in funding per student. Jeff said that the finance commission is looking into that but that the data they are using hasn't been updated since 1996, so they're "*basing finance on*" data two decades old!

The average starting salary for teachers in PISD is \$51K, and "we want to replicate that statewide."

Johnny Lewis asked how much money was being lost to "*weighted average attendance*." Jeff estimated \$200M next year.

There was a question about licensing of roofing contractors (non-existent in Texas). Jeff said that was among the failures because the lobby for "*fly-by-night*" roofers was too strong. It will be a problem on the coast.

Earnest Burke asked about affordable "*workforce housing*" for public service workers. Jeff said he's working with Rep. **Carol Alvarado** on that, but those efforts have "*fallen short*," because affordable housing is anathema to established housing.

Jeff Beckley asked what "*political issues got in the way*" of Robin Hood reform. Jeff Leach said that he's "*doing everything I can to do away with Robin Hood*," but the reality is that the disagreements are between urban and rural legislators. Jeff Beckley thanked him for House Bill 21 which was "*a step in the right direction*."

Ric Kasmiskie inquired about the number of ISDs that send money via Robin Hood. Jeff said 500 out of the 1100 ISDs actually need the help. 262 pay into the system. PISD pays \$155M this year, and that makes it #3 after Austin and Southlake.

Cooper asked Jeff why the government doesn't think before it speaks. Jeff had no answer for that.

Jamee Jolly wanted to know who will be on the commission. Jeff said a broad spectrum of participants: parents, ISDs, business communities, etc.

Nancy thanked Jeff for "*representing us well in Austin*" and supporting transparency. She asked him for his justification for supporting charter school vouchers. Backpedaling, he averred that he was a proud product of public education as were his children, BUT he is a

"*strong proponent of choice*." (It presumably doesn't hurt that educational funding is lowered by privatization of education, and funding of education is a prime part of State budgets.) He conceded that vouchers draw funds away from public education, but he hopes it doesn't poison his relationship with public educators.

Someone asked, "What keeps you up at night?" He couldn't resist a bit of flippantry: "*My two-year-old son!*" On a more serious note, he decried "*expediency politics*" when the State needs "*bold, audacious vision*."

Rick offered Jeff our multiport charger when Mary latched onto declaring, "*We need that!*"

John Caldwell cautioned folks to "*drive in the middle lanes*," because long gas lines clogged the right lanes. Jeff Leach declared the problem to be not with production but distribution. Tanker trucks were having difficulty getting out of Southeast Texas. "*All gas stations will be full next week*," he promised.

Alex Johnson advertised a high school/college leadership event for the week-end.

Rick Horne told us that the 5810 DG will send out an email about how to help with hurricane relief, then led us in the Four-Way Test and belled us gone a 1:02.



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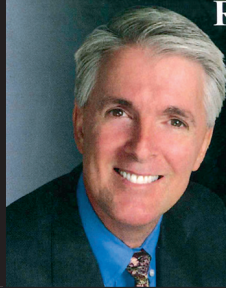
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